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SUBJECT: PRT GHAZNI: LOCAL LEADERS FORM CIVIL SOCIETY SHURA THAT  
COULD HELP PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS - INCLUDING NEW GOVERNOR

11. (SBU) Ghazni city politics are the most vocal and visible politics in the province. The city's five officially recognized "shuras" shape public opinion and influence its expression. In January, a shura encouraged anti-Coalition Forces protests after the accidental shooting of ten Afghan police officers. This spring, the shuras discouraged protests over food prices and teacher salaries. The shuras often represent Ghazni province to the President's Office and to the National Assembly and will be helpful to new Governor Mohammad Usman as he begins work in Ghazni. Ghazni's official shuras represent leaders of the Hazara, Pashtun, Tajik and Sikh communities. The inter-ethnic "Cultural Association," which includes many professionals, is the fifth shura.

#### A NEW AND UNIFIED CIVIL SOCIETY SHURA

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12. (U) These powerful civil society voices became better organized and more coherent in late April when their leaders formed a joint coordinating body - a civil society shura - composed of five members from each shura. Former Governor Khosti, local businessman and developer Khalil Khotak, and Mehshrano Jirga Member Maulana Abdur Rahman all had a hand in the new shura's creation. The shura's main concerns echo frequently heard complaints: insufficient development assistance, insecurity in the province's rural areas, administrative corruption, and a lack of attention to "Islamic principles" in government. The new shura may have the clout and sense of responsibility to suggest solutions to these perennial problems.

13. (SBU) The creation of the civil society shura suggests a maturation of Ghazni's civil society movement. The shura could help Ghazni's new governor, Dr. Mohammad Usman (a Kandahari) to understand Ghazni and manage his relationship with local communities. However, its members may exploit their influence to receive favorable treatment from the Governor's office. For example, former Governor Khosti cleared bureaucratic hurdles for an organizer's real-estate development. Provincial Council (PC) and shura members both deny designs on each other's bureaucratic turf, but some tensions are evident. The PC President told PRToff that Governor Usman should listen to the PC first, and handle his relations with shuras through the PC, an elected body representing all of Ghazni. His argument has merit: un-elected and representing only Ghazni city and its environs, the civil society shura is important, but not representative of the whole province.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: There is value in the concept of a single body of manageable size that can speak and act responsibly on behalf of local interest groups. Governor Usman needs to work with the Provincial Council as well as the vocal civil society shura, and to

encourage the two bodies to respect each other's roles.  
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